



Cúirt Uachtarach na hÉireann  
Supreme Court of Ireland

**Holocaust Memorial Day Remarks**

**Delivered by Mr Justice Donal O'Donnell, Chief Justice, at the  
Holocaust Memorial Day Ceremony on 29 January 2023**

The devastation of the Holocaust left two third of the Jewish people of Europe murdered and rendered their culture and history on the brink of oblivion. This left behind the momentous task of rebuilding Jewish life on European soil.

Thankfully, this same endeavour has been possible in the decades since the Holocaust in a more united Europe. Gradually reconciliation replaced mistrust and states began a process of necessary critical self-examination, acknowledging the role that they, and their citizens, played in the Holocaust. This process, as much as the improving economic conditions, allowed the restoration of the confidence of European Jews. However, while many European states have made great strides in this process of critical self-examination, violence, discrimination, and prejudice against the Jewish people has yet to be eradicated.

Antisemitism is a particularly virulent form of racism. It can be communicated through a vast array of means, whether through attacks on Jewish people, their synagogues, schools or businesses, or casual remarks in a workplace, antisemitic chants at a football match or the representation of Jewish people in modern media. The virulency and versatility of antisemitism across Europe has been further fuelled by the rise of alt-right and white supremacist movements around the world.

Social media has been, in many ways, a perfect accelerant for this process, allowing the fermentation and dissemination of hate speech and cruelty, where extremist rhetoric can develop unchecked and unheeded. The ease with which a Tweet or Reddit thread can be shared perpetuates the language of hate with ease but more concerningly works to normalise such language as demonstrated through its seeping into the national discourse. As a result, ideas which once

languished in Facebook groups or the errant Tweet in a thread can become mainstream, and consequently viewed as somehow acceptable.

Recalling the genocidal tragedy of the Holocaust in the last century necessitates addressing the challenges we face in the present one. Declarations and acts of antisemitism were hateful and wrong then and remain so in the modern day. Each of us has a responsibility to remember what happened, but so do we each have a responsibility to call out such declarations and acts for what they are, whenever and wherever they are manifested.